"If I had needed to evacuate students, I don't know where I would have taken them. The campus was a mess: trees down, glass, stuff fell off the buildings and was lying all around, water mains were leaking and making geysers in the play field."

Principal, Northridge, 1994

The ABCs of Post-Earthquake Evacuation

A Checklist for School Administration and Faculty

A. Evacuation should **NEVER** be automatic.

- There may be more danger outside your building or facility than there is inside.
- There may be no safe assembly area outside. There may be no clear routes to get outside, and alternate routes may need to be cleared.
- The lighting inside your building or room will probably be out — it may be **DARK**.
- Before any decision is made to vacate all or part of a school, someone must find out if there **IS** 1) a safe route out, **AND** 2) a safe place to assemble the students outside.

B. BEFORE an earthquake (NOW), survey your school with evacuation in mind.

1. Look for potential post-earthquake hazards **INSIDE** the building:

   ❒ Suspended ceilings

   ❒ Pendant light fixtures

- ❒ Large windows — either exterior or interior — not protected against shattering

- ❒ Tall bookcases or cabinets that may topple because they are not bolted to the wall
- ❒ Classroom equipment such as computers, TVs, VCRs, stereos, and slide projectors

- ❒ Stairwells

- ❒ Storage areas for cleaning, painting, or other hazardous materials

- ❒ Science labs, especially chemistry

- ❒ Shop areas

- ❒ Places where the main gas supply or electric current enters the building

- ◆ Designate evacuation routes that avoid as many of those hazards as possible.

- ◆ In addition, decide on alternate routes to your main routes.

- ◆ Consider students with disabilities as you think about your evacuation routes.

- ◆ Make sure staff knows what to do and where to go if the students are already outside the facility when the earthquake happens.

2. Look for potential post-earthquake hazards **OUTSIDE** the building:

   - ❒ Power lines

   - ❒ Trees

   - ❒ Areas near buildings that may have debris fall on them — parapets, roof tiles, chimneys, glass

   - ❒ Routes past concrete block walls

   - ❒ Covered walkways

- ❒ Places under which large gas mains run
- ❒ Areas near chain link fences (which can be electric shock hazard if touched by live wires)
- ❒ Hazardous materials storage areas

- ◆ Designate open areas outside that are without overhead hazards and removed from potential danger spots; choose an off-campus spot such as a park for back-up.
- ◆ Assembly areas should be as close to the facility as is safe so that students and staff have easy access to bathrooms, phones, and the student release point.
- ◆ Designate who will have the responsibility to assess conditions after a quake and report findings to administration and co-workers.

"After the shaking stopped, I just wanted to get those kids out of there as fast as I could, but luckily I looked out the door first — trees, bricks and wires all over. It's a good thing we didn't leave the building."

Daycare program teacher, Santa Cruz, 1989

3. Everyone should be informed about evacuation plans:

- ◆ Once routes and assembly areas have been chosen, make floor plans and maps and distribute to all staff.
- ◆ Inform all personnel and students about the plans made and the routes chosen.
- ◆ Have all substitute teachers review the plan before starting each class.
- ◆ Make it clear that a post-earthquake evacuation route differs from a fire evacuation route, and that alternate routes may need to be used.

- Include all students and staff with disabilities in the drills and exercises.

- Hold drills and exercises **two or three times a year**; practice alternate routes.

- Evaluate your drills and exercises and make changes as necessary.

C. AFTER the earthquake, gather information and make decisions.

ADMINISTRATORS:

1. Assess the situation — inside and outside.

2. Decide whether to evacuate all or parts of buildings.

3. Choose the route(s) and the assembly place.

4. Communicate directions to all teachers.

FACULTY :

➔ Do **NOT** automatically rush your class into the corridor or outside the building.

1. Wait to hear instructions from an administrator or the designated scout.

   ➔ In circumstances in which you wait a long time without hearing anything, you will have to make decisions yourself:

2. If you are in a unsafe classroom — the ceiling has collapsed, wires are crackling, broken glass or chemicals are all over the floor, you smell gas or smoke — you will want to leave, **BUT** you must inspect for damage before you move to safety.

3. Have another teacher watch your students while you find the best way to evacuate and the safest place to go. You may not need to go outside to the assembly area, but merely move from one inside room to another.

4. Account for all your students before you leave the classroom.

➔ If the classroom damage forces your class to evacuate, take injured students with you **ONLY** if moving them will not cause further injury. If you must leave an

injured student, try to protect the student from items that might fall during aftershocks. Post a large, visible sign indicating the student is there.

➔ The lights will probably be out and it may be dark — **ALWAYS** have a flashlight that works.

5. Be alert as you lead students down stairwells or corridors to anything (dangling lights and ceiling struts, broken glass, slippery floors) that could hurt them or you.

➔ In an aftershock, everyone should duck and cover until the shaking stops.

6. Once you get to a safe location, communicate your whereabouts to the administrator by whatever methods have been specified in your plan — sending a runner, using a walkie-talkie, or returning to your classroom to post a note.

"We waited to see what the teacher did after the earthquake, but he didn't know what to do. He kept saying, 'Don't worry don't worry, stay calm stay calm,' but it was scary."

Student, After-school program, Loma Prieta, 1989

For more information on school emergency planning, contact one of the OES Earthquake Program offices listed below.

OES Coastal Region:

1300 Clay Street, Suite 400 , Oakland, CA 94612, (510) 286-0858

OES CALIFORNIA
Governor's Office of Emergency Services

OES Southern Region:

11200 Lexington Drive, Building 283, Los Alamitos, CA 90720-5002, (562) 795-2905

1350 Front Street, Suite 2041, San Diego, CA 92101, (619) 525-4287

117 W. Micheltorena, Suite D, Santa Barbara, CA 93101, (805) 568-1207

Visit the OES Website at www.oes.ca.gov for general disaster preparedness information.